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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000340

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER AKSU ON ANTI-TERROR COOPERATION

Classified by Ambassador Eric S. Edelman; reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: In Jan. 16 meeting with Interior Minister Aksu, Ambassador highlighted USG interest in strengthening counter terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing with the GOT. Aksu asserted CT relations with Syria are improving, committed to instituting passenger and baggage checks to address airport security loopholes, and updated the Ambassador on EU harmonization laws that he claimed would put an end to Iranian visa-free travel. End Summary.

COUNTER TERRORISM TRAINING

2. (C) The Ambassador commended the Turkish National Police for very thorough and aggressive investigations into the Istanbul bombings and stressed the importance of a close working relationship between Post and the TNP. Aksu contends the GOT is one step closer to formalizing a CT training relationship after concluding a memorandum of intent that contains very similar language to Leahy (ATA Memorandum). Aksu cited as evidence of the GOT's commitment to cooperation, multiple bilateral security and cooperative agreements ranging from combating terrorism, to drug smuggling, and human trafficking. The Ambassador emphasized that acceptance of Leahy language would secure CT training opportunities with the FBI and DEA.

3. (C) The Ambassador reiterated an invitation for a GOT delegation to visit the Counter Terrorism Center in Washington. Both agreed the invitation would best be accepted following PM Erdogan's late-January U.S. visit) demonstrating positive results from Erdogan's visit to the U.S.

OUTSTANDING ASSISTANCE FROM SYRIA

4. (C) Aksu asserted that his recent meeting with President Assad highlighted greatly improved Turkish-Syrian cooperative CT efforts. Immediately following the Istanbul bombings the TNP furnished a list of suspects to Syrian authorities. The list included detailed intelligence, photos and other identifying data, on suspected conspirators. Syria responded immediately by extraditing the conspirators and those who sheltered them. Aksu claimed that Syria's assistance resulted in the quick capture of many of the conspirators.

VISA RESTRICTIONS ON IRANIANS WILL BE ADDRESSED THROUGH EU HARMONIZATION LAWS

5. (C) The Ambassador noted the importance of instituting visa requirements on travelers from Iran. Aksu said he agreed, but indicated the issue of visa-free travel would be addressed on a more general level (not just targeting Iran) as part of the larger effort to harmonize Turkish and European travel laws. Aksu concluded, "It will take some time."

NEW AIRPORT SECURITY RULES STILL NOT FLYING

6. (C) Aksu said he supports closing a customs and immigration loophole in Turkish airport security that enables travelers to avoid checks at Turkish border and customs controls. He said the administrative details of implementing passenger and baggage checks at the first port of entry are still being hammered out by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation.
EDELMAN